

# Safe Walking

## Keeping Young Pedestrians Safe and Fit

Child  
Safety  
Facts  
2015



### Why cars are a danger, especially to kids under 10

#### Research shows:

- Children pay attention to only one thing at a time. When playing, they may forget about traffic.
- Children often act without thinking.
- Children do not understand the danger of a moving car. They cannot judge the speed of a vehicle coming toward them.
- When children see a car, they think that the driver sees them and can stop for them.
- Children are not as able to judge where a sound is coming from.
- Because children are small, it is harder for drivers to see them.

Children can learn the steps of safe street crossing. However, they often do not do what drivers expect. Even children who know how to cross safely can get confused in traffic.

**See the other side for tips on child safety for specific ages.**

### Walking is good for everyone's health

Walking in a safe area is one of the best ways for children and adults to stay healthy. It also allows older children to become independent. Parents can teach young children safe walking skills while they walk together.

### Did you know?

- Many parents think young children can cross streets safely long before they are ready. Know your child's ability. Experts say many children are able to make good judgments in traffic at about age 9 or 10.
- Most often children are hit by vehicles near their homes in the afternoon. Some are hit at bus stops by cars passing their school bus illegally.
- Speed kills. A person hit by a car going 20 mph has a 5 percent chance of dying. At 40 mph, the chance of dying increases to 85 percent.

### Parents make the difference—Be a teacher and role model

**Teach your child to walk safely** and set a good example. Show him how to cross streets safely (see page 2). Make sure he learns to stay on sidewalks. On streets where there are no sidewalks, teach him to walk facing traffic.

**Say “no” when your child begs to walk places without an adult** if she is not ready to do so. Find safer things she can do to feel independent.

**Know how much you can trust your older children** (age 10 or over). You must decide when they are ready to walk to places without an adult.

**Find the safest walking routes** to school, the park, the library, and friends' homes. (Use the Walkability Checklist—see Resources, page 2.)

**Find safe play areas away from streets, driveways, or parking areas.**

Children need space for active outdoor play, but they are in danger near traffic.

**Make sure an adult or trusted teenager watches children under age 10 carefully** around traffic. Do not expect children under age 12 or 13 to care for younger ones near streets.

**Make children easy to see.** They should wear fluorescent (bright) colors in the day and clothes with reflectors in the dark.



*Hold hands with a child in a street or parking lot.*

**Slow down when YOU are driving.** Be careful on local streets or near schools and playgrounds. Always stop for school buses with flashing red lights. Work with neighbors to slow traffic on local streets.

**Make  
Every Ride  
A Safe Ride**



## Toddlers (1 to 3 years old)

**Dangers:** Being hit by a starting vehicle while playing in a driveway. Wandering into the street while walking or playing.

### ■ What can parents do?

**Walk all the way around your vehicle** before you get into it. Be sure that there are no children behind or in front of it.

**Find fenced places** where children can play safely. Keep them away from streets, driveways, or alleys. Always watch them closely.

**Always hold hands** with your child while walking, crossing, and in parking lots.



*Toddlers playing in the driveway are in danger from a backing vehicle!*

## Preschoolers (3 to 5 years old)

**Dangers:** Running suddenly into the road, alley, or parking lot while playing.

### ■ What can parents do?

**Find safe areas** where children can play, like a park or schoolyard. Keep close watch on your children while they play!

**Hold hands** while walking and crossing. Show children how to watch for cars.

## Early elementary children (6 to 9 years old)

**Dangers:** Dashing into the street while playing or walking with friends.



Crossing streets without help from an adult or older child. Walking to and from school, especially alone or along busy streets.

### ■ What can parents do?

**Realize your child may seem to know how to cross but is still too young to be responsible.**

**Practice safe street crossing together.** Walk facing traffic in places where there are no sidewalks.

**If your child walks to school,** make sure she goes with an adult or older child (5th grade and older).

Check to make sure your child obeys the older child.

Teach your child to do what the crossing guards say, and to use crosswalks.

**If your child takes a school bus,** make sure an adult is at the school bus stop. Bus stops are dangerous. A child could be hit by his own bus or a passing car.

In the afternoon, an adult should meet the bus. If children have to cross the street after leaving the bus, they must follow the bus driver's directions. They should cross in front of the bus. Teach them to watch for cars passing the bus.

## Older elementary children (10 to 12 years old)

**Dangers:** Thinking they will not get hurt. Being confused on busy streets. Walking in the dark, or while using cell phones or wearing headphones.

### ■ What can parents do?

**Help your children learn to judge** where and when to cross safely. Make sure they know about traffic signals. At corners, teach them to look over their shoulders for turning vehicles. Remind them to stay aware of surroundings.

**Make sure children wear** clothes with reflectors when they walk at night and in the early morning. Pedestrians are very hard to see when it's dark.

## How to Cross Streets Safely\*

**Talk to your child about these steps while you practice crossing:**

1. Stop at the edge of the street.
2. If you are near a corner with traffic signals, go to the corner to cross. Use crosswalks whenever possible.
3. Cross where you can see up and down the street (not on a curve or where things block your view). This means drivers can see you better, too.
4. Look left-right-left to make sure no traffic is coming. If at a corner, look all ways. Watch for turning vehicles.
5. If a driver seems to be slowing down, look at his eyes. Make sure he sees you and stops before you cross.
6. Walk—don't run—straight across when no traffic is coming. Keep looking left and right as you go.

\* Children under age 10 should always cross with an adult or responsible older child.

## Resources

**Walk to School Day:** [www.walktoschool-usa.org](http://www.walktoschool-usa.org)

**National Center for Safe Routes to School:**  
[www.saferoutesinfo.org](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org)  
(search for Walkability Checklist)

**National Highway Traffic Safety Admin.:**  
[www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov); (click pedestrian safety)

**Safe Kids Worldwide:** [www.usa.safekids.org](http://www.usa.safekids.org)  
(search for pedestrian safety)

**Keep Kids Alive—Drive 25 Campaign:**  
402-334-1391, [www.keepkidsalive.com](http://www.keepkidsalive.com)